

II. REMARKS

Claims 1-17 are pending in this application.

In the Office Action, claims 1-17 are subject to restriction under 35 USC 121 and 371. Specifically, the Office alleges that claims 1-9 (Group I), claim 10 (Group II), and claims 11-17 (Group III) do not relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1.

Applicants hereby elect Group I, constituting claims 1-9, with traverse.

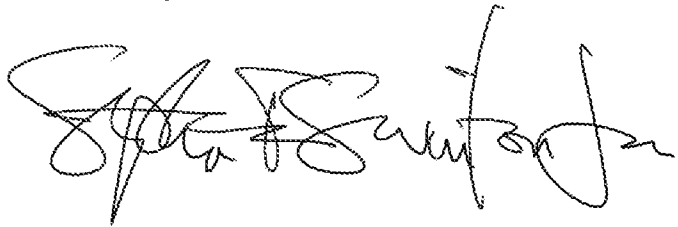
Applicants do not acquiesce in the correctness of the Office's determination that claims 1-17 are subject to restriction and reserve the right to pursue the full scope of the subject matter of the claims in a subsequent patent application that claims priority to the instant application.

Applicants submit that the subject matter of Groups I and II is sufficiently related that a thorough search for the subject matter of the Group II invention would encompass a search for the subject matter of the Group I invention. In fact, Applicants note that all of the steps of independent claim 1 are, in essence, included in claim 10, since claim 10 depends directly from claim 1. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the search and examination of the individual Groups would be very similar or identical, and thus a search for both Groups could be made without serious burden. "If the search and examination of all the claims in an application can be made without serious burden, the examiner must examine them on the merits, even though they include claims to independent or distinct inventions." MPEP § 803. It is respectfully submitted that this policy should apply in the present application in order to avoid unnecessary delay and

expense to Applicants and duplicative examining by the Office. Reconsideration of the election/restriction requirement and rejoinder of claim 10 is respectfully requested.

Prompt examination on the merits is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner require anything further from Applicants, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen F. Swinton, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Stephen F. Swinton, Jr.
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